



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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**LOCAL CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION
MEETS WITH WHITMAN,
URGES ADMINISTRATION TO STICK TO DREDGING PLAN ON
HUDSON PCBs**

WASHINGTON -- At a meeting today in the office of U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman said that she would make her internal decision about the proposed cleanup of the Hudson River next week and that the EPA's final ruling would likely be made public in mid-September. Whitman made the statement at a meeting with Hinchey and U.S. Representatives Mike McNulty (D-NY) and Frank Pallone (D-NJ). Staff members for U.S. Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) were also at the meeting. The Members of Congress expressed to Whitman their strong support for EPA's remediation plan.

"We stressed to Administrator Whitman that 32 members of Congress from New York and New Jersey, including all four senators, support the EPA's cleanup plan," said Hinchey. "I know that Ms. Whitman supports dredging and I hope she sticks to EPA's plan. It is imperative that the EPA move forward with its plan to remove PCBs from the hotspots in the Hudson."

"While I am hopeful the EPA will make the right decision in the end, I am disappointed they are now delaying their decision for a month," Pallone said. "It is irresponsible for the EPA to continue to leave over 100,000 pounds of contaminated sediments in the river. The river will not clean itself, and therefore the dredging of these materials must be approved immediately to protect residents in New York and New Jersey from eating contaminated fish."

McNulty said, "I continue to strongly endorse the original dredging proposal drafted by the EPA Region II office in New York, and hope that this plan is not compromised. I look forward to supporting a final decision that is effective in removing PCBs from the Hudson River."

"I thank Administrator Whitman for meeting with our offices today. Our constituents are counting on the Environmental Protection Agency to make a timely decision," said Lowey. "The current dredging proposal will ensure the health and well-being of the communities that rely on the Hudson. It's time to stop the delays and clean up our river."

In December 2000 the EPA Region II office released its proposal to remove 100,000 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) from the areas of the Hudson River in which they are most highly concentrated. The PCB's were dumped in the river by General Electric over a period of 30 years. Under the federal Superfund law, the polluter is required to pay for the removal of the contamination.

A public comment period on the EPA proposal concluded in April and EPA officials indicated that a final decision would be made public on August 17. This week published reports suggested that the decision would be delayed until September, a suggestion that Whitman confirmed today.

Hinchey, Lowey, McNulty, Nadler, and Pallone asked to meet with Whitman in May. A meeting was arranged for July 12, but was cancelled by Whitman, whose office indicated that she would likely not have time for the meeting to be rescheduled. The five members of Congress then wrote to Whitman stressing the urgency of their request. Whitman had previously met with opponents of the remediation plan, but not with any of the plan's supporters. After receiving the letter Whitman agreed to meet.

At today's meeting, the congressmen brought up the rumors of a compromise cleanup proposal that have been reported by the media and told Whitman that they would not support any plan for a more limited remediation effort. Whitman replied that she was not currently considering any specific compromise plan.

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